

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: Matt Schiffman (312-729-3672)

**ARLINGTON HIGH SCHOOL STANDOUT NAMED
GATORADE NEW YORK GIRLS CROSS COUNTRY RUNNER OF THE YEAR**

CHICAGO (January 8, 2015) — In its 30th year of honoring the nation's best high school athletes, The Gatorade Company, in collaboration with USA TODAY High School Sports, today announced Bella Burda of Arlington High School as its 2014-15 Gatorade New York Girls Cross Country Runner of the Year. Burda is the first Gatorade New York Girls Cross Country Runner of the Year to be chosen from Arlington High School.

The award, which recognizes not only outstanding athletic excellence, but also high standards of academic achievement and exemplary character demonstrated on and off the racecourse, distinguishes Burda as New York's best high school girls cross country runner. Now a finalist for the prestigious Gatorade National Girls Cross Country Runner of the Year award to be announced in January, Burda joins an elite alumni association of past state award-winners in 12 sports, including Ryan Hall (1999-00, 2000-01, Big Bear HS, Calif.), Derek Jeter (1991-92, Kalamazoo HS, Mich.), Candace Parker (2001-02, Naperville Central HS, Ill.), Abby Wambach (1997-98, Our Lady of Mercy, N.Y.) and Mark Sanchez (2004-05, Mission Viejo HS, Calif.).

The 5-foot-4 senior raced to the Class A individual state championship this past season with a course-record time of 17:49.7. The state's Gatorade Girls Cross Country Runner of the Year as a sophomore in 2012, Burda also won the 2014 New York Federation Championship in 17:50.4 and broke the tape at the Nike Cross Nationals New York Regional championships in 18:15.3 to qualify for the NXN Final, where she finished 44th.

Burda has maintained an A average in the classroom. Also a talented singer and musician, she has volunteered locally preparing food for the Lunch Box program, which provides hot meals for the needy in Dutchess County.

"Bella's accomplishments speak for themselves, and she's a better young lady than she is an athlete," said Arlington coach Steve Arnett. "I've been coaching since 1973 and I can truly say I'll never meet a better example of what a student-athlete can be."

Burda has signed a National Letter of Intent to compete in cross country and track and field on scholarship at Villanova University this fall.

The [Gatorade Player of the Year](#) program annually recognizes one winner in the District of Columbia and each of the 50 states that sanction high school football, girls volleyball, boys and girls cross country, boys and girls basketball, boys and girls soccer, baseball, softball, and boys and girls track & field, and awards one National Player of the Year in each sport. The selection process is administered by the Gatorade high school sports leadership team in partnership with [USA TODAY High School Sports](#), which work with top sport-specific experts and a media advisory board of accomplished, veteran prep sports journalists to determine the state winners in each sport.

Two-time winner Burda joins Gatorade New York Girls Cross Country Runners of the Year Jessica Lawson (2013-14, Corning East High School), Jillian Fanning (2011-12, Fayetteville-Manlius High School), Aisling Cuffe (2010-11, Cornwall Central High School), Aisling Cuffe (2009-10, Cornwall Central), and Emily Lipari (2008-09 & 2007-08, Roslyn) as athletes who have won the cross country award since its inception in 2007.

To keep up to date on the latest happenings, become a fan of Gatorade Player of the Year on Facebook and follow us on Twitter. For more on the Gatorade Player of the Year program, including nomination information, a complete list of past winners and the announcement of the Gatorade National Player of the Year, visit www.gatorade.com/poy.

###